

## **OPINION**

by Associate Professor Zhivko Zhekov, Ph.D. – Medical University "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov" - Varna

member of a scientific jury in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor", announced by SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" in State Gazette no. 48/28.06.2022, under Professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Speech Therapy)

### **1. Compliance of the procedure and the submitted documentation with the current regulations**

To participate in the announced competition, Chief Assistant Elena Kirilova Boyadzhieva-Deleva, Ph.D., from the Faculty of Faculty of Education Sciences and Arts (FESA) of the SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" submitted her documents and is the only candidate for the academic position of "Associate Professor". The competition has been announced in accordance with the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Regulations on the Terms and Procedures for Acquiring Scientific Degrees and Holding Academic Positions at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski".

### **2. General biographical presentation of the applicant (education, qualifications, professional experience, etc.)**

In 2004 Chief Assistant Elena Kirilova Boyadzhieva-Deleva, Ph.D., completed her specialization in speech therapy, BA "Bachelor" at the FNPP of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". In 2006, she graduated from the "Communicative Disorders of Development" programme at the Ministry of Education, and in 2008 she graduated from the Ministry of Education "Kinesitherapy of Persons with Neurosomatic Diseases" at the same university. In 2015, she successfully defended her doctoral dissertation at the University of St. Kliment Ohridski", FNPP, to the department of "Special Pedagogy and Speech Therapy" in professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy, Special pedagogy - Speech therapy.

The professional path of Chief Assistant Ph.D. Elena Kirilova Boyadzhieva-Deleva, assistant professor, started in March 2004 as a trainee speech therapist; from 09.2004 to 12.2009, she worked as a speech therapist and from 12.2009 to the present she has worked at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", FESA at the Department of "Special Pedagogy and Speech Therapy" and the Department of "Speech Therapy", where she successively held the positions of "assistant" and "chief assistant". During the period of her teaching work, she actively participated in various qualification courses, scientific research projects and building her academic career with great desire and professionalism.

### **3. Teaching activity**

As a teacher at the Department of Speech Therapy, Chief Assistant Deleva, Ph.D. develops independently and in a team an impressive amount of study courses related to the disciplines she teaches. She conducts exercises in more than 12 academic disciplines in the specialty "Speech Therapy", educational qualification degree "Bachelor" and "Master" in full-time and part-time form of education. She takes an active part in the academic life of the department and the faculty.

Her overall activity as a specialist and teacher at the faculty gives reason to rate her qualities and professional experience very highly as regards the announced competition.

### **4. Scientific research (artistic) activity**

The attached evidence in a large number of scientific forums is a confirmation of the applicant's activity and motivation for development. Chief Assistant Deleva, Ph.D. indicates participation in 4 scientific forums (1 in Bulgaria and 3 abroad), posters and scientific presentations at 2 international forums and 1 at a national forum, and over 7 popular science participations - radio lectures, TV series, electronic platforms or podcasts.

Chief Assistant Deleva impresses with her joint work with students and doctoral students in research and artistic projects; student guide to participating with papers at the Student Science Forum (2018; 2019); work on a university project with the participation of doctoral students; participation with students in a project under "ERASMUS+" program for the period 2020-2022; head of the "Students Helping Students" initiative at the Therapeutic Hall of the FESA (academic year 2021/2022); head of a volunteer initiative for speech therapy assistance for children with II and III year students of the "Speech Therapy" specialty in the period 2018-2020.

### **5. Scientific production**

To participate in the competition for the academic position " Associate Professor ", the candidate Chief Assistant Ph.D. Deleva has attached publications from the period 2018-2022, which followed the occupation of the position of "Chief Assistant". She participated in the competition with 34 publications as follows: 3 monographs (1 main habilitation thesis; 1 other monograph not proposed for habilitation work; 1 monograph on the basis of a defended dissertation for obtaining the ONS "doctor"); 1 study aid; 1 co-authored chapter of a collective monograph in English (referenced and indexed in Scopus); 2 studies, 24 articles (5 of them co-authored, of which 2 with students and 1 with a doctoral student); 6 referenced and indexed in world databases with scientific information; 3 other publications (2 posters, of which 1 co-authored and 1 co-authored popular science article). Of the proposed publications, 3 are in English in foreign journals and publications (1 chapter co-authored in a collective

monograph, ed. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Publishing Group; 2 articles - Knowledge International Journal, 1 publication in English in the proceedings of an international conference in Bulgaria, 1 publication in Bulgarian in a foreign journal (Knowledge International Journal) and 2 posters in English from an international conference.

### **5.1. Compliance with the scientometric indicators for occupying the academic position**

In general, the scientific work of Chief Assistant Ph.D. Deleva exceeds the minimum national requirements (according to Article 2b, paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria as well as the requirements of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" to occupy the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the scientific field and the professional field of the competition, as can be seen in the table below.

A group of indicators	Content	Number of points according to the minimum requirements for associate professor	Candidate points
A	Indicator 1	50	50
B	Indicator 2	0	0
B	Indicator 3	100	100
Г	Sum of indicators from 4 to 10	200	517,5
Д	Sum of indicators from 11 to 13	50	340

### **5.2. Content analysis of the presented scientific work for participation in the competition**

Highlight of the proposed publications is undoubtedly the monograph "Diagnosis of speech and its disorders in childhood", which examines in depth the etiopathogenesis of speech disorders in childhood and offers a comparative and critical analysis of their clinical picture. It is necessary to note that for the first time in a speech therapy monograph in Bulgarian the methods for screening and diagnosis of speech disorders are systematized.

The other monograph, which was not submitted for the main habilitation thesis - "Oromotor speech therapy: theoretical aspects and practical application", shows the high competence of the candidate to combine and analyze the theoretical and applied aspects of the problem. The first detailed description of the relationship between the oromotor mechanisms of eating and speech in the context of their ontogenetic development in normal and pathological conditions, as well as the influence of harmful habits in the oral area and orthodontic disorders on eating and speech, is impressive in our speech therapy literature. The monograph can be used as a guide to plan oromotor therapy sessions.

Scientific articles and studies can be divided into several thematic areas: description, diagnosis and therapy of speech disorders, developmental language disorders, theoretical justification of speech therapy practice. Out of a total of 22 articles described in the reference, 11 present and analyze the results of their own empirical research, including with large samples (more than 100 researched individuals). Three of the articles are related to successfully implemented projects. The remaining scientific work is also in accordance with the competition profile.

## **6. Scientific-theoretical, applied, artistic and other contributions**

Undoubtedly, the author's standardized battery "Test of Oral Motor Abilities" (TOMS), which is the first criterion-oriented diagnostic tool of its kind in our country, conforming to world psychometric standards, has an indisputable contribution. (1.1.)

As a contribution to speech therapy practice, I also find the detailed systematization of the means of speech therapy oromotor therapy according to the principles of medical rehabilitation and the description of myogymnastics as a system of exercises, different from classical articulation gymnastics. (1.2.)

The detailed analysis of the typical development of motility, language, speech and cognitive processes in early and preschool age and the particularities in the development of these spheres in children with cerebral palsy is also of contributing importance. (1.3.)

The blanks and forms intended for the diagnostic, therapeutic and advisory work of students and trainees in speech therapy and for beginning practitioners have a practical and applied contribution. (2.1.)

**We can group the contributions from the other publications into the following subject areas:**

### ***Description, diagnosis and therapy of speech disorders***

First attempt in the Bulgarian speech therapy literature for a detailed definition and analysis of the concept of "oral motor abilities" and the hierarchical arrangement of the related concepts "oromotorics", "orosensory", "speech and articulatory praxis". A model of the hierarchy in the performance of speech tasks for smooth switchability between three key positions of the articulators is proposed, with a view to assessing the influence of semantic and phonological coding on motor planning and programming. (4.1.) (5.23.). A competently substantiated and original author's classification of the means of oromotor speech therapy is proposed. (5.22.)

On the basis of empirical data from our own study of 182 children, the connections between typical and impaired speech development and disorders of eating mechanisms and food selectivity are clarified (5.12.).

The in-depth overview of the models of verbal communication (4.2.), as well as the detailed terminological and conceptual analysis of children's speech apraxia and the attempts to justify its existence as an independent nosological entity (5.4.), deserve high praise.

### ***Developmental Language Disorders Department***

Specific language disorders are discussed in the context of bilingualism and multilingualism (3.1.). The specifics regarding speech therapy services for children with language disorders in Bulgaria compared to the picture in other 34 countries are outlined. The place of the diagnosis of "developmental language disorders" at the junior high school stage of education, the degree of support from specialists (5.15.), the influence of pathology on the levels of self-esteem of students (6.1.) and the factors that depend on the choice of therapeutic strategy in cases of language disorders (6.2.).

### ***Theoretical substantiation of speech therapy practice***

Here the publications can be divided along several main lines:

- Planning speech therapy (5.3., 5.11., 5.14., 5.18., 5.19.) - the contribution of the articles is in the clarity they provide in terms of planning, organization, implementation and reporting of the results of speech therapy telepractice in Bulgaria during of the Covid-19 pandemic for the period 2020-2021;
- Speech therapy practices for early intervention and prevention (5.2., 5.6.) - the need to clearly state the place of the speech therapist as a specialist in the field of early intervention, as well as the differentiation of his/her role from that of the special pedagogue, is substantiated;
- Speech therapy counseling (5.1.) – a detailed analysis of the content of the term "speech therapy counseling" is presented.

## **7. Personal impressions**

The scientific work submitted for review indisputably reflects the high professional qualities of the candidate. I share my excellent impression of the scientific and academic achievements of Chief Assistant Deleva, Ph.D. She is an extremely capable and ambitious scientist who fully meets the requirements of the competition for which she is applying.

## **8. Notes, recommendations and questions**

I have no critical notes and recommendations. I recommend that the colleague continues to persistently develop and perform in the scientific fields chosen by her.

## **9. Final assessment**

In conclusion, I can confidently state that in the scientific work of Chief Assistant Deleva, Ph.D., there are a large number of theoretical and applied scientific contributions. The documents and scientific production submitted for participation in the competition meet all the requirements of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (LDASRB), the Regulations for the Implementation of the LDASRB and the Regulations of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

After familiarizing myself with the materials and the scientific work presented in the competition, I find it completely justified to give my positive assessment and to recommend to the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Education Sciences and Arts for the selection of Chief Assistant Elena Kirilova Boyadzhieva-Deleva, Ph.D., in the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical sciences, professional direction 1.2. Pedagogy (Speech therapy).

Date: 10.11.2022

Jury member:

(Associate Professor Zhivko Zhekov, Ph.D.)